UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR ANNOUNCES GENERAL FISH AND WILDLIFE PLAN FOR RED WILLOW PROJECT, NEBRASKA

A General Plan clearing the way for managing fish and wildlife resources on approximately 4,380 acres of Federal land at Hugh Butler Lake, near McCook, Nebr., has been signed by Melvin O. Steen, Director of the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission, and Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, the Department of the Interior announced today.

The area will be administered by the Nebraska Commission. The actual transfer of administration will be the subject of a subsequent agreement between the Nebraska Commission and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Hugh Butler Lake, located on Red Willow Creek, is a major feature of the Red Willow Unit, a Bureau of Reclamation project that provides water for irrigating about 11,000 acres of land in the Red Willow Creek and Republican River Valleys.

The lands covered by the General Plan will be administered and developed as an upland-game area by the Nebraska Game, Forestation and Parks Commission. The area will provide habitat particularly suitable for ring-necked pheasants. Other game species which will benefit from management include fox squirrels and rabbits. Small flocks of relatively rare prairie chickens occasionally winter in the area.

Nearly 1,800 acres of upland-game habitat will be lost as a result of construction of the new project. Development of upland-game habitat on the management area will mitigate this loss.

General Plans on water-development projects are provided for by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act to permit the conservation and development of fish and wildlife habitat at Federal water-development projects. Under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with State fish and game departments, studies proposed developments to determine the effects of the project on fish and wildlife resources, measures needed to prevent or compensate for damages to these resources, and opportunities for improving fish and wildlife resources in connection with the project.

A fish and wildlife plan may be recommended for adoption as a part of the plan for a water-development project. Portions of a project area suitable for fish and wildlife management purposes may be recommended for administration by either the concerned State fish and game agency or the Fish and Wildlife Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Areas that have primary value for migratory waterfowl may be retained by the Service as units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.